

March 1, 1971

PETER COHEN TALKS OF FREEDOM

HON. WILLIAM D. HATHAWAY

OF MAINE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 1, 1971

Mr. HATHAWAY. Mr. Speaker, Peter A. Cohen, a senior at the Edward Little High School in Auburn, Maine, was recently awarded first place in the Maine's statewide Voice of Democracy contest.

The contest is annually sponsored on a nationwide basis by the Veterans of Foreign Wars and its Ladies auxiliary. This year, according to Cooper T. Holt, executive director of the VFW's national office here in Washington, over 400,000 students participated in the contest, competing for the five scholarships which are awarded as the top prizes. Winning contestants from each State will be brought to Washington for the final judging later this month as the guests of the VFW. The national winner will receive a \$10,000 scholarship; second prize is \$5,000; third prize, \$3,500; fourth prize, \$2,500; and fifth prize, \$1,500. The contest's theme this year is "Freedom—Our Heritage."

Peter Cohen, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Sheldon Cohen of 51 Grandview Avenue, Auburn, Maine, has, at 17, already distinguished himself as student, athlete, and writer. He is a varsity letterman in football and track, a most successful participant in the advanced junior study program at the University of Maine, a coeditor of his school's yearbook, and winner of Pepsi Cola's essay contest "I've Got a Lot To Live."

I congratulate Peter for achieving yet another high distinction, realizing that the excellence of his Voice of Democracy theme evidences a wisdom and understanding that will assure him many more future achievements. Peter, I understand, is considering a career in law. Should he be as successful in this endeavor as he has been in past performances, he is sure to be an outstanding credit to that profession.

Mr. Cohen's essay follows:

FREEDOM—OUR HERITAGE
(By Peter Cohen)

It is now four A.M. I was awakened by the powerful words of Martin Luther King swirling in my mind:

"I'm not weary. I'm not fearing any man. Mine eyes have seen the glory..."

I have seen fields pregnant with colorful blooms and children romping the hillside. I have seen the smiling little girl, with her soft hair swaying in the breeze, running along a desolate beach in pursuit of sea shells. I have seen the snugness of a New England farmstead during a Northeastern snowstorm.

I have seen everything that is distinctively American—from the sweat of the steel mill to the chilly ritual of maple sugaring in Vermont. I am happy; I am jubilant; I am exultant; I am feverishly optimistic.

Yes, I have seen the glory!

I have seen the little boy with his grandfather fishing on the bank of a stream. I have seen families sitting around a raging fireside, hashing over old times spent together. I have seen cheering fans eating sizzling hot dogs and steaming hot chocolate at a typical bleek football game. I have seen the young boy on a swing—laughing cheerfully as he swings

higher and higher in the sky—flying into a new future...

Yes, I have seen the glory!

I have seen an inner air, a majestic air in which an individual can draw the breath of self-respect.

I have seen a country that gives every individual—rich or poor—the opportunity to forge ahead and reach the top. I have seen a country that allows a man to work at what he pleases without interference from the government. I have seen a country that believes that men and women have an inherent right to hew out the patterns of their individual lives, just as long as they don't harm their fellow human beings.

I have seen a country where all sorts of different people, drawn from every nation in the world, get along together under the same big sky.

Yes, I have seen the glory!

I have seen a country that has created a Bill of Rights which protects the individual from narrowness and despotism. I have seen a country in which poor men can hold their heads as high as rich men, even when fate seems to be going against them.

But most important, I have seen people—people like you and me, who go to any church they choose, and who cannot be prosecuted for their religion. I have seen people who elect the representatives they wish to govern them, and remove those representatives by vote. I have seen people who remain loyal to one cause, one country and one flag.

I have seen people who have a fierce belief in individual liberty, in individual opportunity, and in the collective wisdom of free men.

Yes, I have seen FREEDOM, this seven-letter word that means so much to any human being. But it is not enough to have freedom, what is needed is to use freedom responsibly. Men joined together in society lose some forms of freedom and gain others. We exchange the brutal freedom of the savage for the sophisticated freedom of civilized man.

This is how we grew. This is what we are. These are the things we believe. This is freedom!

The late Martin Luther King stated:

"When we let freedom ring, when we let it ring from every village and every hamlet, from every state and every city, we will be able to speed up that day when all of God's children, black men and white men, Jews and Gentiles, Protestants and Catholics, will be able to join hands and sing in the words of the old Negro spiritual, 'Free at last! Free at last! Thank God Almighty. We are free at last!'"

POW PLEA TO VIETCONG

HON. RICHARD H. ICHORD

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, March 1, 1971

Mr. ICHORD. My Speaker, I include the following:

As you and my colleagues know, the Committee on Internal Security in the 91st Congress conducted several investigations and hearings into the activities of subversive groups, some of which were operating on campus and affecting the lives of our college students.

During two of those inquiries—one into the activities of Students for a Democratic Society, a second into the New Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam—we became especially concerned with the confinement and treat-

ment of prisoners of war held by the North Vietnamese and the Vietcong.

Especially informative was the testimony of Lt. Robert F. Frishman and Petty Officer Douglas B. Hegdahl, two servicemen whose release from Communist captivity was ostensibly arranged through the intervention of a delegation which included representatives of the New Mobilization Committee to End the War in Vietnam, the Fort Hood Three, SDS, and Newsreel, the tradename of Camera News, Inc., which is affiliated with SDS.

Then we heard the heart-rending testimony of the wives of two prisoners of war, Mrs. Edwin Arthur Shuman III, and Mrs. Dale Walter Doss, both of Virginia Beach, Va.

Their accounts of efforts to send and receive mail from their husbands revealed the callousness of those not truly concerned with the plight of our prisoners.

However, perhaps some progress is being made in reaching and, hopefully, influencing the decisionmakers among the North Vietnamese and the Vietcong.

A few weeks ago in my district a small group of residents and students from Columbia were granted a rare interview with Vietcong representatives at the Paris peace talks.

A staff writer with the St. Louis Globe-Democrat, Sue Ann Wood, wrote a noteworthy account of that meeting. Let me share her story, titled "Group Takes POW Plea to Viet Cong," which appeared in the February 20-21 weekend edition of the Globe-Democrat.

The efforts of those students and educators point up the leadership and responsibility of our academic communities when, it seems to me, it has been, at least in recent months, almost commonplace to lambast the American college student and play down his evinced desire to end the war as radical campus rhetoric.

I am proud of the leadership exhibited by the teachers and students at Stephens College and by the Missouri State Teachers Association, whose executive director is my good friend, Everett Keith.

Miss Wood's story follows:

GROUP TAKES POW PLEA TO VIET CONG
(By Sue Ann Wood)

American concern about prisoners of war held by the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong was graphically expressed by a small group of Columbia, Mo., residents and students granted a rare interview with Viet Cong representatives at the Paris peace talks early this month.

Now back from their trip to Paris, members of the Columbia group were in St. Louis Friday to talk about their experiences.

Dr. David A. Otto, who teaches biology at Stephens College, headed the group of eight making the trip to deliver some 20,000 letters from Missouri State Teachers Association members and petitions bearing 15,000 signatures of Columbia students and citizens. Others in the delegation were Dr. Eugene Windmiller, a surgeon; Dale Cornelison, grocery store owner, and Misses Carolyn Crawford, Debby Hargett and Ann Searles, Stephens College students.

The idea for the Paris venture began last fall, Otto said, when he and others started gathering signatures on a petition to the North Vietnam government asking for humane treatment of prisoners under terms of the Geneva Convention.

problem of high unemployment and continuing inflation.

Of still greater importance, is the growing number of unemployed people, in every occupation and field of endeavor. Both workman and technician, white collar and blue collar workers alike have been affected by spiraling rates of unemployment. As my colleagues know, unemployment imposes the same hardship on everyone, regardless of one's ethnic or social background. It is a hardship that must be eliminated.

Unemployment last month was 6 percent according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, while 1 year ago in January 1970 unemployment was 3.9 percent. This is quite a substantial increase, especially if we realize that we are actually describing the state of millions of men and women, not mere percentage points. While the annual average unemployment rate for 1969 was 3.5 percent, the average annual unemployment rate for 1970 was 4.9 percent. In my home State of Massachusetts, the problem of unemployment is a real and devastating one, the rate often climbing as high as 12 percent of the work force. Unemployment is like a plague. It begins gradually, then spreads at an alarming rate, until it flourishes at the epidemic level at which it does today. The people affected by this economic plague must receive treatment in the form of money to live on.

With all this in mind, I am today submitting a bill which would help alleviate some of the hardship placed on people by the current rise in unemployment. The bill would expand the coverage granted under the "Employment Security Amendments of 1970." In that bill the Congress established on a permanent basis a program of extended benefits over 13 weeks for unemployed workers who exhaust their right to benefits over an initial period of 26 weeks, thus bringing total coverage to 39 weeks. The new bill would establish on a permanent basis a program of extended benefits over an additional 13 weeks for unemployed workers who exhaust their right to benefits over the initial period of 39 weeks, thus bringing coverage to 52 weeks.

It is impossible to sustain a standard of living based on 39 payments a year when a man or woman lives all 52 weeks of the year. The person who suddenly finds himself unemployed one day does not see prosperity on the horizon, as the administration does. For him, there is no reason to believe that a job is waiting around the corner. The probability that the person will be unemployed for more than 39 weeks is great. While encouraging that worker to seek employment elsewhere, we must provide for that person's needs. The prospect that he or she will find a job in the near future is not promising at this point, as the ranks of the unemployed swell from month to month. We must help these people face the uncertainty of the future by guaranteeing them minimal financial security.

It is imperative that we, the elected Representatives of the people, enact legislation that will lessen the hardship and anxiety of unemployment. The high rate of unemployment which the Nixon

administration has fostered through inaction and the pursuit of unsound economic policies must be reversed before the situation worsens. The States cannot carry the burden alone. They are already hard put to support their burgeoning welfare roles. They must be assisted by the Federal Government.

It is toward this end that I ask for the enactment of this bill by Congress to permit Federal sharing of the cost of unemployment benefits which extend for 52 weeks.

Mr. Speaker, I represent an area in which unemployment is growing rapidly, mostly in the field of those who have been engaged in scientific development. I hope that the appropriate committee will give every possible consideration to this bill.

LAOS SITUATION

(Mr. DENNIS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. DENNIS. Mr. Speaker, so far as Southeast Asia is concerned, these are times that try men's souls. The Government of the United States is engaged in an important effort to stabilize the situation in a manner consistent with our national interest and holding forth some hope for future peace. These efforts reached a critical phase with the current operation in Laos.

We ought not to complicate our problems either by the fears of panic or by the rhetoric of politics.

Mr. Speaker, I call on my colleagues, and I call on the American people, to stand by our Government and the policies of our Government in the Far East.

Like many other Americans, I have been giving a great deal of thought to the situation in Laos and to our position in Southeast Asia in general. This is a most serious and distressing situation to all Americans, and particularly so to those who have, or have had, members of their families personally—and sometimes tragically—involved. It is certainly not least distressing to the President of the United States.

The situation in Indochina is unsatisfactory basically because of mistakes made in the past. It is certainly highly debatable whether we should ever have engaged in such a military venture on the mainland of Asia, and in my judgment it is not debatable at all that—once having done this—we should have fought the war, with conventional weapons only, but with the view to obtaining, and in such a fashion as to have obtained, a prompt, decisive, and favorable military decision.

Instead, we first intervened on the mainland, and then gradually drifted into military escalation, without ever making a decision to go in and win.

These mistakes had been made when President Nixon came into office. He had to face and to deal with the very difficult problem thereby created.

In this situation President Nixon rejected, wisely, as I believe, the two extremist arguments. One urged a much belated, all-out, and greatly expanded

military effort—an effort which our people were unwilling to support. The other advocated an immediate and complete American withdrawal, cutting our losses and leaving the South Vietnamese to their fate. This latter would in effect have been the end of America as a Pacific power, perhaps as a world power, and would have left the bitter taste of frustration and dishonor in the mouths of many Americans.

President Nixon has attempted a middle way. That way calls for negotiation with the enemy on the one hand—and all our proposals here have been unanimously rejected. It calls on the other hand for gradual American military withdrawal and for so-called Vietnamization of the war.

This is a hard program, because it calls for continued, although reduced, American losses, without the promise of ultimate American victory. It calls also, however, for the creation of a viable and friendly government in South Vietnam, and for an honorable and successful maintenance of an American influence and presence in the Pacific world. It has called not for any true escalation or widening of the war, but rather for the recognition of tactical realities, by means of a successful incursion into Cambodia against enemy bases there, and through a similar Vietnamese incursion into Laos against enemy supply lines in that country. The success or failure of this Laotian effort hangs currently in the balance, and its reasonable success is very likely vital to the success of the whole Vietnamization program.

American authorized troop strength in Vietnam has decreased by more than 200,000 over that of 2 years ago, and according to plan will have been decreased by 265,000 men by the first day of May. Combat deaths in 1970 were over 10,000 less than in 1968. But a residue of American support troops may remain in South Vietnam, as they have remained in South Korea, for an indefinite period of time, and they will remain—as the President has said—so long as American prisoners of war continue to be held by the enemy.

Let those who object to these policies dare to suggest as their political platform that America abandon to their fate these, our fellow Americans, who are prisoners of war.

The course before us is hard, but for myself I do not see what else President Nixon—or any President—can or could do, given the present circumstances.

The President has acted responsibly, boldly, and with decision. He has made few promises, and has kept those he has made. In his ongoing effort for our country he needs, and he deserves, our support.

CREW OF APOLLO 14 VISIT CHAMBER TONMOW

(Mr. FREY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute, to revise and extend his remarks and include extraneous matter.)

Mr. FREY. Mr. Speaker, tomorrow the crew of Apollo 14 will be coming to this very Chamber. This alone will be an honor for my colleagues and me and yet

these three gentlemen are but a symbol of something even greater. Fifty years ago, we were lucky if we could fly across the Atlantic and now we have had six men on the moon. It is amazing that our country has been able to progress so rapidly in these past few decades and it speaks well for our technology and know how.

Today, when our goal of reaching the moon has been accomplished our space program is under severe attack. Critics are popping up and asking "why go to the moon while people are starving and suffering back here on earth?" What many of these people fail to recognize is that there is a benefit to all on earth from our space program.

First and foremost, the technology which took us to the moon, has the capability to improve the living here at home. As Dr. Thomas Paine, the former Director of the National Administration of Space once said:

Given all the technological resources of our country and the money required and we could render Los Angeles a smog free city in ten years.

What Dr. Paine was saying is that given the national resources which we have we could clear our Nation of smog and air pollution. The same is true of almost any technological problem. From our space program can come the scientist, the engineer, and the technician, all with the skill needed to solve these problems. In fact, it is because of this capability that I have worked with the colleges in my district, and with Federal agencies to establish "Project Retro," a retraining center to move these skilled technicians into the fields of environmental sciences and urban planning. The accomplishments of the three astronauts is a symbol of American technological know-how.

But there are other benefits from our space program. Soon there will be an orbital lab. It is here that scientists will conduct experiments to better the well-being of mankind. If Louis Pasteur had not experimented, we would not have penicillin today. The same may well be true of our experiments in outer space. One thing is certain, the presence of an orbital lab and eventually the space shuttle will assist in our understanding of the universe around us. The presence of a telescope in outer space will eliminate that interference of our atmosphere. The ability to study the effects of the suns radiation on our planet and the seismic experiments carried out in the Apollo missions are just a few examples where space and the manned space flight program has and will benefit us. There are a multitude of others.

In brief, the achievements of these three astronauts and the people involved in the space program are just the beginning. Their knowledge and ability to solve problems will continue to improve the well-being of man and will continue to be one of America's most important national resources.

GREATER SECURITY NEEDED FOR CAPITOL HILL

(Mr. MINSHALL asked and was given permission to address the House for 1

minute, to revise and extend his remarks and include extraneous matter.)

Mr. MINSHALL. Mr. Speaker, the bomb that exploded in the Senate wing of the Capitol this morning comes as a shock to all Americans, but as no surprise to those of us who long have anticipated just such a calamity in view of the ridiculously lax security measures in force on Capitol Hill.

Six years ago, on January 13, 1965, I took the House floor calling for greater security measures. This was shortly after a member of the American Nazi Party charged into the House Chamber and disrupted a session. At that time I introduced a resolution to create a bipartisan special committee to investigate and report on Capitol Hill security. No action was taken on my resolution.

Two years later, on February 1, 1967, I reintroduced this resolution, pointing out that crime on Capitol Hill, including the Capitol Building, five office buildings and grounds, had risen 51 percent over the previous year. Again, my resolution was left to gather dust in committee.

What does it take to open the eyes of Congress to the fact that through its laxity it is endangering the lives of thousands of Capitol Hill employees and tourists, to say nothing of jeopardizing these priceless and historic buildings which house irreplaceable treasures dating back to the very founding of our Nation's Capital in Washington. It is bravado of the most foolish kind to pretend that real and present physical dangers do not exist, and to ignore a tightening of security that will apply not only to Hill personnel, but to visitors as well.

In this connection I would like to point out the growing concern many of us feel over unauthorized persons using office facilities in the House. I do not know what the situation is on the Senate side, but it is a fact that one House Member presently permits use of his office as headquarters for a private organization lobbying against the war in Vietnam. Another group issues a news bulletin called "Leadership Letter" out of 1709 Longworth Office Building, a two-room suite assigned as "additional space" to a House Member. I understand that the House leadership is aware of these abuses of taxpayers' property but allegedly is at a loss as to what to do about it. The steps to be taken are clear enough and on the books. No Member has authority to turn over office space to further the lobbying efforts of any private organization no matter how worthy may be their goals.

It is this sort of slipshod administration that has led to slipshod security on Capitol Hill.

Ironically, the explosion this morning comes just 13 years to the day after the Puerto Rican nationalists shot up the House Chamber, gravely wounding a number of Members. I submit that under present lax security, a repetition could occur in either Chamber at any time. As for gaining access to the Capitol Building at night, despite prefatory police protection at building entrances, it is child's play to get into any of the buildings, and through the network of connecting tunnels, to reach the Capitol Building at any time.

We were fortunate that no lives or in-

juries can be counted among the costly damages of this morning's bomb explosion. Next time, innocent victims may be involved. In order to prevent a "next time" from occurring, I am revising my original resolution. New legislation, which I will introduce within the next few days, will call for creation of a joint committee of the Congress, composed of members of both parties from House and Senate, to investigate and report recommendations for insuring greater security in the Capitol and adjacent buildings.

I hope that the Congress will be prompt in acting on my resolution.

REPEAL OF CERTAIN EXCISE TAXES BY THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT COULD BE A PRIME SOURCE OF ADDITIONAL INCOME FOR STATES AND LOCALITIES

(Mr. LATTA asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks and include extraneous matter.)

Mr. LATTA. Mr. Speaker, on February 4, 1971, President Nixon sent a message to the Congress detailing a proposal he first outlined in his state of the Union message for sharing Federal revenues with the States. The President has provided the Congress and the American people with a clear concept of the bold steps that must be taken to help relieve the various States and municipalities of their ever-mounting fiscal burdens, and to assist State and local governments to effectively meet the needs of their people.

It is clear that unless something is done, many State and local government units face bankruptcy.

In short our federal system faces the greatest trial of our history. A new direction is imperative if we are to slow down, and hopefully reverse, the continued erosion of private and State-local responsibility that has been accompanied by the steady accumulation of Central Government direction. A new set of fiscal conditions is necessary if we are to rescue federalism in the United States.

The President's proposals outline a possible path of rescue. At the same time, however, we cannot lock the door to other possibilities for providing additional sources and avenues of relief. Therefore, it is the clear and manifest duty of the Congress to examine rigorously the President's proposals, and if alternatives must be accepted, to accept them.

I have gone over the President's proposals with a great deal of care. I believe they will work. Therefore, I have joined with other Members of this body in sponsoring the legislation that will transfer the concept of revenue sharing into law.

Since the President and others have detailed the specifics of the proposals, I will not venture a point-by-point reexamination. I think, however, it might be worthwhile to go into the arguments for and against the concept.

In general, revenue sharings has the following advantages over other practical alternatives:

Revenue sharing is simple, straightforward, clear, and direct in its conception and operation;

It provides the States with more dis-

CIA-Trained Force Reported Blocking Ho Chi Minh Trail

SAIGON (UPI)—A CIA-trained force of 2,500 hill tribesmen in Laos has moved into the Sepone area to block another section of the Ho Chi Minh Trail and backstop a renewed drive into Laos by South Vietnamese forces, military sources said today.

With more than 10,000 South Vietnamese reinforcements and hundreds of U.S. helicopters reported preparing for a new drive toward Sepone, Laotian Premier Prince Souvanna Phouma was disclosed to have appealed to U.N. Secretary General U Thant for intervention with the great powers to remove all foreign troops from Laos.

The heavy fighting of the past week in Laos died down today but a South Vietnamese infantry unit of 900 men abandoned another fire support base in the bogged down fight to cut the communists' supply lines, front dispatches reported.

The South Vietnamese incursion by 16,000 men has been stalled for two weeks 16 miles inside the border. The main target of the drive, which began Feb. 8, reportedly was Sepone, a crossroads of the supply trail 27 miles inside Laos where mountain passes open from the north.

Guerrillas at Muong Phine

Military sources in Saigon said the Laotian hill tribesmen trained, financed and equipped by the Central Intelligence Agency, had been moved to block the road junction of Muong Phine in Laos, another crossroads of the trail west of Sepone.

North-south Route 23 and east-west Route 9 — the axis of the South Vietnamese drive into Laos — cross at Muong Phine, about 10 air miles southwest of Sepone.

Its capture would block a major sector of the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Communist supplies were reported passing through there

Reds Believed Meeting Ho Trail Supply Quota. Page A-10

after South Vietnamese cut Highway 914.

Spokesmen said the guerrillas in one operation last week destroyed a dozen Communist supply trucks, blew up a bridge and drove off the security detail guarding the North Vietnamese convoy.

UPI Correspondent Kim W. Lenson reported from Vientiane that Souvanna disclosed his appeal to Thant in a speech to students, made public today in the Laotian capital.

Fourth Base Abandoned

The sources said the South Vietnamese infantrymen left the fire support base, called Hotel 2, because heavy antiaircraft fire prevented U.S. helicopters from dropping supplies or evacuating wounded. It is the fourth base the South Vietnamese have abandoned under Communist fire in a week.

Sources also reported that 10,000 South Vietnamese reinforcements are being sent to aid the stalled drive in Laos.

(Pentagon press spokesman Jerry W. Friedheim, when asked today about the reports from Saigon that 10,000 South Vietnamese reinforcements are being sent to aid the stalled drive in Laos, replied, "I have absolutely

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nothing here to substantiate those stories."

(Friedheim, did not rule out future movements of additional troops in to Laos.)

Official spokesmen said 320 South Vietnamese soldiers have been killed in the three-week-old Laotian operation, with 1,002 wounded and 99 missing in action. They said 3,118 Communist troops had been slain in the campaign.

38 Copters Officially Lost

The U.S. command put American losses at 40 dead, 35 wounded and 18 missing in action. The Command said an Army UH1 Huey helicopter was shot down over Laos yesterday, wounding a crewman.

Spokesmen said it was the 38th American chopper destroyed in support of the Laotian operation in addition to two U.S. jets.

(Maj. Richard Gardner, a spokesman for the U.S. Command, said 1,400 of the enemy had been killed by American air strikes, the Associated Press reported.

(Gardner also said additional American helicopters had been moved to Khe Sanh to support the Laotian operation, but refused to say how many. Other sources said they would replace those shot down and also would increase the fleet, which numbered about 600 at the start of the Laotian operation, AP said.)

The Hotel 2 base was evacuated yesterday by two battalions of 1st infantry division troops, who walked out carrying their wounded, the sources said.

The South Vietnamese abandoned a damaged \$2 million CH43 Sea Stallion troop-carrying helicopter to prevent its falling into enemy hands. They also destroyed a 155-mm. howitzer.

UPI correspondent Joseph W. Galloway said they fought their way to the border post of Ham Nghi in South Vietnam, carrying men who had been wounded as long as three days ago.

The artillery base is about 20 miles southeast of hill 31, another South Vietnamese combat base overrun Thursday by North Vietnamese troops and tanks and the scene of bitter fighting over the weekend.

Claim Victory

South Vietnam today claimed victory in that four-day battle, scene of the first major fighting between tanks in the Indochina war.

Col. Nguyen Truong Luant, commander of a South Vietnamese armored column, said South Vietnamese troops are in the area of Hill 31 today, but not on the hill itself. The North Vietnamese withdrew.

The Communist Pathet Lao said their forces captured more than 100 South Vietnamese paratroopers in storming Hill 31 and that 207 American aircraft have been destroyed in southern Laos since South Vietnamese forces moved into the area Feb. 8.

A broadcast communique by the Pathet Lao said those captured at Hill 31 included the colonel who commanded the 3rd South Vietnamese Paratroop Brigade.

Col. Luant said he saw more than 15 Communist PT76 tanks go up in flames in the battle of Hill 31 but he did not see a single man leave the tanks.

"It was remarkable. The tanks were burning, but kept moving and firing," he said. "Not one crewman got out of those tanks. I think their leaders locked the tank doors before the battle."

South Vietnam was reported rushing the 10,000 men into Laos to reinforce that 16,000-man task force trying to cut the Ho Chi Minh Trail supply system.

The first reinforcements, more than a battalion of South Vietnamese marines, were airlifted to the big base at Khe Sanh 12 miles from the Laotian border yesterday and flown into Laos aboard an armada of helicopters.

According to military sources the reinforcements are needed to meet a threat posed by an estimated seven North Vietnamese regiments and tank units operating along Route 9 inside Laos.

The South Vietnamese operation has been stalled about 16 miles across the border for nearly two weeks.

Lt. Gen. James W. Sutherland, commander of the 9,000-man American team which is supporting the South Vietnamese in the Laotian invasion, said in Khe Sanh that the offensive "has not gone as well as we intended."

However, he said, it is an over-all success.

Major fighting has been underway for more than a week centered around several key spots on Route 9, including Hill 31.